

**A HISTORY
OF THE
ROXBURGH GOLF
CLUB**

1904 - 1979

Written by: S. Pearson

How fortunate Roxburgh residents are that the early pioneers of this district were farsighted enough to set aside an area for recreation, incorporating as it does today, bowling, tennis, children's playground, golf and sports ground.

It is not known exactly when the Roxburgh Golf Club came into being, as no trace of minutes prior to 1912 can be found. Golf is thought to have been first played between the period 1901 - 1904, and the following is the information of its early history, which has been gained by the writer.

In 1901, Dunedin architects, Mason and Wales were in Roxburgh adding the top storey to the BNZ building, and doing the brickwork on the present Commercial Hotel. Mr Wales, at that time suggested to Mr Haines, who was Bank Manager in Roxburgh from 1891 - 1911, that the Borough Reserve be used for a golf course, after which Mr Haines called a meeting of likely players. Also the following extract, dealing with Roxburgh, taken from the "Cyclopaedia of New Zealand," published in 1905, gives further proof of date - "A large recreation reserve is used for athletic sports. Football, cricket, tennis and golf club, in addition to a brass band are among the social attractions of the place." And in 1905, Mrs F T D Jeffrey received a letter from Charles Coop stating that all hands and the cook were playing golf at Roxburgh.

Not much is known officially from then until the minutes of 1912, apart from the fact that the course had 14 holes which were named after the gold dredges working in the area. These were First Chance, Lady Roxburgh, Kohinoor, AI, Rise and Shine, Sailors Bend, Double Entry, Muddy Creek, Endeavour, Keep-it-Dark, Enterprise, Hartley and Riley, Jubilee and Last Chance. Mr Arthur Robertson, who was affectionately nicknamed "Muldoon" was the first greenkeeper, and with Mr Haines, marked out the course and acted as coach to the early members.

The Club has in its possession a booklet "Rules of the Roxburgh Golf Club 1908."

Subscriptions in those days were Men 5/-, Ladies 2/6.

The reserve at this time was used for the grazing of stock, much of the town's milk supply coming from this source, until, in the early 1930's, a local farmer introduced a milk delivery run. The addition of sheep in the late 1920's didn't add to the enjoyment of the game by any means, but with the cows and horses, helped keep the grass short, which is something on the credit side - there seemed to be so many disadvantages because of their presence.

At the Annual Meeting on 19th April 1912, Mr Collins was elected President, Mr Anderson Vice-President and Mr H Waigh Secretary and Treasurer. Just two months later on June 12th, the Management Committee met to elect a new President, owing to the death of Mr Collins. Mr Anderson was elected President, Mr Jeffrey Vice-President and Mrs S Laloli and Mr A G Laloli were elected to the committee. At a Club meeting on September 25th 1912, the ladies present were constituted as a Committee, and a meeting was convened for the 21st October that same year. The Club had a membership of 26 ladies and 14 men. Names of players of that year, and previous, as well as the ones already mentioned, included Misses Steele, Bowden, Baillie, Howell, McMullan, Smith, McLeod, Collins, McKenzie, Newlands, Bidgood, Ryan, Whelan, Harris, Waigh, Robertson, Mesdames Collins, Anderson, Fuldseth, Kinaston, Allen and Messrs Fuldseth, Coutts, Houston, Bath, Allen, Gilmour, Drake, Orchard, Gilchrist, Ryan, F Laloli and Toms. Office Bearers elected at the 1914 Annual Meeting were President, Mr F Laloli, Vice-President, Mr Woodhouse, Secretary, Mr J H Waigh Jr., and in 1916 Mr A Anderson as President, Mr J Rattray Vice-President, and Mr R Sinclair Secretary. It was also resolved that the subscriptions be reduced to 2/6 all round. Those for the years preceding had been 10/- men and 5/- ladies.

It seems that during the war years, the Club went into recess, for the next record tells of the minutes of a meeting on June 10th 1920, to reform the Roxburgh Golf Club. The minutes read "A meeting was called by Mr J H Waigth Jnr to form a Golf Club, and was fairly well attended. On the motion of Mr Waigth, seconded by Mr S Robb, Mr F Laloli the last President of the old club was again elected. Mr Laloli thanked those present, and explained that owing to the war and other calls being made on members' time, the old Club had just fallen through for want of support. Now, with some fresh arrivals, it was felt that a Golf Club was wanted, hence this meeting." Rev Morland was elected Vice -President and Mr S Robb Secretary. At the Annual Meeting of 1921, Rev Morland was elected President and Dr J Gilmour Vice-President. At the same meeting it was decided to affiliate with the N Z Golf Association. It was also decided to approach the Borough Council to see if the Links could be vested in the Golf Club, so that the Club could have control, if necessary. The Annual Meeting of March 23rd 1922 saw another change in Office Bearers with Dr Gilmour President and Messrs C Lawrence and J H Waigth Vice-Presidents.

It was at this 1922 meeting that one of the most eventful and far-reaching decisions to affect the Club was made. It was moved by Mr J C Gilchrist, seconded by Mr J Murphy that the Club arrange a Goldfields Tournament, this first one being held on September 22nd and 23rd of that year. This Annual Tournament has now been held without fail ever since, and has grown from those first two days to six now, with entries in the Men's events exceeding the capacity of the course, with resulting balloting. It is always held at the same time each year, that is, the first week of the August school holidays. It is interesting to note some results of that first tournament. Mr A Burton was the winner of the title of "Goldfields Amateur Champion." Mr F Jeffrey won the first Open Handicap event and Mr G N Jeffrey tied with Mr W Gilligan (Roxburgh Policeman) in second Open Handicap.

At the Annual Meeting of March 24th 1925, the club adopted the Constitution and Rules. The same meeting also decided that the course layout be reinvestigated, and minutes record that there was some discussion as to the golf ball marker, and it was decided that 2/6 be added to the subscription that year to cover cost of same, non-members to pay 1d for each ball. Also at the same meeting, the need for a Clubhouse was brought up. Lack of funds was the main concern, and the suggestion of the Executive was that a Bazaar be held as a joint venture with the Tennis Club. An Executive meeting on April 1st 1925 agreed that an offer from Mr A Bowden be accepted to build a Clubhouse at a price of approximately 112pounds, the suggested size being 18' x 14'. In the Statement of Receipts and Expenditure for the year ending 1925, we see that the Clubhouse cost 119 pounds seven shillings and sixpence. The Bazaar raised eighty seven pounds and 12 shillings. This first building was erected where ladies' No 5 tee is now located. Previous to that, players hung their coats and belongings on a fence where the pine trees now stand. In 1934 it was shifted to the present site, and a verandah extension was added in 1937. In 1943 the addition of a ladies' dressing room with drainage was effected, and in 1948 a kitchen extension was added. Because of an influx of golfers from the fast growing Hydro village, it was realised that further extensions would have to be made. The Committee tried hard to obtain a Government grant, but was initially unable to succeed because of the building being on a reserve. However, plans were proceeded with, and a detached room of 60' x 20' was officially opened on October 4th 1952. In 1953, 300 pounds was granted by the Government towards its cost. In 1957 plans and specifications were drawn up for a further extension, but this was not proceeded with, and debentures were repaid to members. In 1961 it was decided to include the verandah into the men's Clubhouse, and alterations to the shop layout at a cost of 120 pounds. From 1966 money was being put aside each year for a new Clubhouse, and at the 1972 Annual Meeting, a motion was passed that it be proceeded with, and was erected on

the same site, the kitchen and men's toilet block being incorporated into the new building. It was opened in August 1977 and cost \$47,000 to build, the money being raised by debentures and a bank loan. Just after its completion, its replacement value was put at \$105,000. Voluntary labour by members was the contributing factor in keeping costs down, as has always been the case with most of the Club's projects. Before the bank loan could be granted, a survey of the pavilion site had to be made, so that a registered lease of that area of land, (Clubhouse and car park) could be obtained. An implement shed measuring 40' x 17' was erected in 1962.

In 1922 Dr K Ross of Dunedin visited Roxburgh for the purpose of advising on a changed layout of the course, and in 1927, four new holes were completed, giving the course its first 18 holes. The names were altered to the following - Highway, The Roll Down, Monument, Happy Valley, The Ridge, The Rushes, The Basin, Doctors Rock, Rise and Shine, Molyneux, The Dam, Ravine, Turn Again, Terrace, Orchard, Narrows and Sports Ground. SS. 71.

It is most unfortunate that the minute book covering the period from 1928 to 1944 has been lost, with the result that the history of the Club over this period comes from newspaper clippings, mainly the "Mt Benger Mail."

Mr S Robb, who had given outstanding service as Secretary in the difficult post war years from 1920 died in office in 1934. He was succeeded by Mr A Burton, who held the post for the next 5 years. There are not many trophies belonging to the Club on which the Burton name does not figure, Mr Burton himself having the honour of being the first name inscribed on the Sloper Cup as Senior Champion. Mr G A De Lautour filled the post through the trying war years of 1940 - 1945, when Mr T Incrocci held it for one year, then Mr Burton again until 1948, when Mr J D Brown took over and

became the longest serving office bearer of the Club, his term of Secretary/Treasurer being 20 years, to be followed by that of Treasurer for another 10 years. Mrs D H Hamilton succeeded Mr Brown as Secretary in 1968, retiring after 10 years service, when Mr J McElroy was appointed.

In 1941 Dr Gilmour relinquished the post of President after 19 years service, and was succeeded by Mr W Johnstone until 1943, when Mr W F E Bennetts was elected, a position he was to fill for 14 years. He retired in 1957 and Mr W R Dryden was appointed, his term of office being three years. Then came another three year term, with Mr A F King as President, to be followed by Mr T A Pannett for four years, Mr J A Pannett for one year and Mr D J Domigan for three years. Mr J C Harrison was the next President from 1971 - 1974 when Mr D H Hamilton was elected, retiring from the post in 1977, to be succeeded by Mr G McLauchlan.

In 1938, because of the Health Camp authorities requiring the ground they now occupy, the course had to be altered, and Mr Ted Douglas, Professional at the Otago Golf Club, was engaged for this purpose. The names of the holes were changed with the new layout, reverting back to the mainly dredge names of Golden Run 444 yards, The Roll Down 124, Monument 220, Enterprise 186, Lady Roxburgh 210, Jubilee 265, Teviot 213, Doctors Rock 271, Rise and Shine 135, Kohinoor 212, Molyneux 340, Muddy Creek 213, Ravine 411, Endeavour 223, Keep-it-Dark 347, Electric 200, Narrows 286, Last Chance 90. Total 4390 yards.

The Annual Report for the 1938 season states that considerable expense had been involved in relaying the course to compensate for the two holes provided for the Health Camp Area.

The layout was again altered in the late 1950's, when the 9th hole, Rise and Shine, was eliminated, and a new 18th substituted, the numbering of the holes thus being altered from the 8th onwards. It was at this time that names were again changed to what they are at present, being - First Chance, Golden Gate, Lady Roxburgh, Happy Valley, Long Valley, Surprise, Golden Run, Teviot, Sandy Point, Kohinoor, Molyneux, Mystery Flat, Hercules, Ravine, Sailors Bend, Keep-it-Dark, Endeavour, Last Chance. Over the years, several holes have been lengthened by the relocation of tees.

It was in 1939 that bunkers were introduced, this being a new experience for players, and by 1940 water had been laid on to 6 greens. Also in 1940, the Club became an incorporated body, and in 1948 became affiliated with the Otago Provincial Golf Association.

During the years of the Second World War 1939 - 1945, the Club managed to survive, although for most of those years, there were no competitions for the men. Members in 1943 numbered 35 ladies and 19 men. Eighteen were on Military Service, and regretfully three very popular and valued members did not return. They were H Gilchrist, A Lamb and J B Jeffrey.

It was in 1948 that the planting of trees was first discussed and also the placing of seats around the course. Also in 1948 a telephone and radio were installed in the Clubhouse, and in that same year irrigation had been to a further 10 greens. In 1972, the Club approved the installing of an irrigation system, and raising of loan money up to \$7,000 to pay for it.

A Storage dam at the road entrance to the course did not prove satisfactory, and was abandoned. Finally in 1975, water for the whole course became a reality, with the

installation of pumping equipment on the river, thus ensuring an unlimited supply for both fairways and greens. The cost was approximately \$12,000, nearly twice as much as originally planned, and would have been much more without the voluntary labour contributed by Club members.

In the minutes of 1952, the first reference to sheep on the course is made. The Secretary was instructed to write to the Borough Council "pointing out the damage being done to the greens by the Council's sheep, and suggesting that an extra wire be added to the present fence, and that the Club's greenkeeper would be available to assist." Each green was fenced off, and if a player's ball hit a wire or fence post, the shot was allowed to be replayed. The minutes for the next 16 years referred to sheep on the course at many meetings, with correspondence between the Executive and Borough Council. In 1956, an agreement stated that "from March to November, in future, fairways 1 to 12 and 18 would be free from sheep and green fences could be removed." Over the years the question of the cutting of the fairways seems to have been a bone of contention. Golfers, naturally, wanted the fairways cut, but the Borough sheep had to have feed! In 1958, a joint controlling Committee was set up with the Council. In 1968, the lease of the course was obtained, and an agreement reached with the Council. The President's Report for that year stated that sheep were off the course for the first time in 40 years.

Tree planting, with the resulting beautifying of the course, has always been a major concern of the Club. Attempts were made over the years to get trees established, but what with the presence of sheep and losses through drought, little success was achieved. However, with the removal of the sheep, and installing of irrigation, the trees in most areas are well established, and growth is considerable. As well as the main planting of Oregon pines, there are many ornamental trees planted here and there

around the course, and recently a row of silver birches has been added.

The first One Day Club Tournament took place in 1955, shortly after the Annual Tournament, and has been held in September ever since. At that time, as happens now, local players were being balloted out of the August Tournament because of large entries in the men's events, and the need was seen for club members to be involved in a tournament of their own. Another one was added in May 1974, and with the exception of the Open Tournament, these two One Day events have proved to be the highlights of the golf calendar. As well as the substantial financial support they give the Club, they are important socially in gathering members together. The Autumn one, which falls at the start of the Winter season, stimulates enthusiasm for six months serious golf.

It was not until 1962 that a full-time greenkeeper was employed, when Mr C Kitto was appointed, filling the post until 1967, when Mr D R Broad took over, and is still the Club's greenkeeper. Before 1962, the work was part-time, and at one stage, was shared with the Bowling Club.

The first life member of the Club was Mr F T D Jeffrey, 1932. Others have included Mr J A Pannett, 1950, Mrs S A Laloli, 1956, Mr W F E Bennetts, 1957, Mrs J George Snr 1960, Mr J D Brown, 1963 and Mrs D H Hamilton, 1978.

Over the years, several Roxburgh golfers have represented Otago. They are - Mrs J H George, Mrs W A Hoban, Mrs R Dryden and Messrs T A Pannett, R Dryden and W Kitto, and in the administrative field, Mrs D H Hamilton is the Otago Representative on the New Zealand Ladies' Golf Union, to which post she was elected in 1976, being the first Otago Country member to achieve this position. As well as representing

Otago on the Executive body, she is also chief selector and administrator for the province.

The course record is held by Mr G Clarke of Dunedin, and was established at the Annual Tournament in 1976. In winning the Senior Championship that year, he had rounds of 61, 65 making a total gross score of 126, the lowest ever recorded for this event. The nearest to that figure over the years was 134. The previous course record of 62 had been established by R Dryden some years previously, and was subsequently equalled by Clarke.

There are many Cups and Trophies which are played for annually. All have been donated to the Club, some as memorials.

The first recorded hole-in-one was in 1917, and was played by Mr R A Anderson, who was the Manager of the Bank of New Zealand at that time. It was the fourth hole A1, 192 yards, and was probably our present Teviot. In the 1963 Tournament, no fewer than 3 holes-in-one were recorded.

The first local Diggers Tournament was held on the first Sunday in June 1948, and has taken place at this same time each year since then. Its organisation has been rather unique, because of the fact that it had the same Chairman, Secretary and Committee for its first 25 years. In October 1964 it presented to the Golf Club inscribed, decorative stonework gateposts and gates, in appreciation of the Club's help and support over the years.

The first Easter Foursomes Tournament was held in 1960, and has grown in popularity ever since. Many other tournaments are held. These include Jaycees, Lions, Masonic

And now, some snippets from the early days: -

At the first recorded meeting of the Club in 1912, a minute was passed to the effect "that the Roxburgh Golf Club discountenance the playing of golf on Sundays," and in 1924 it was decided that scores would not be accepted for matches played on Sundays. From the Mt Benger Mail, May 8th 1912 - Latest in swear words when making a bad stroke - "Great Caesars ghost in tights."

Mt Benger Mail, 1917 - Rabbit burrows, somewhat numerous on the course, have been exhausting the patience of some of the players, who in view of so many lost balls, now include a light spade in their golfing equipment. The same paper, May 11th 1921- A Lady golfer getting some sand to make a tee to drive off, had the misfortune to have her fingers caught in a rabbit trap.

In the Otago Daily Times of 2nd June 1922, in an article on the Goldfields Tournament, quoting a player who had played over many courses in the world, to the effect that Roxburgh had the best natural course in New Zealand, if not in the Southern Hemisphere.

"N Z Golf News" March 1970 - quoting Mr Bob Bilton, who in that year toured Central Otago golf courses on behalf of his publication, - "Orchardists, I gather, have little to do in the winter because fruit growing and golf certainly go together if this district is any guide. The Roxburgh Club was founded in 1906, and for the greater part of 64 years, has had an 18 hole course - and what a course. Short, perhaps, by today's Championship standards, but length is only part of the story! Roxburgh is a natural course. It follows the contours, and meanders through many rock outcrops which put a premium on well judged and accurate shots. I am particularly interested in the names of holes on golf courses, and Roxburgh fascinated me. What do you

expect from a hole called Surprise or Mystery Flat? Aren't golf courses torturing enough without making them outright sinister? Roxburgh also has a Sailors Bend - and a hole called Keep-it-Dark. The 18th is Last chance - a polite way of saying 'double or quits' perhaps."

The popularity of the game, and the Club, can be gauged from the fact that as the population growth rate of the Borough and district remains static, the membership of the Golf Club is steadily increasing, and now stands at almost 300. It is a definite asset to the Roxburgh District.

And so, the Roxburgh Golf Club has reached another milestone in its history - its 75TH ANNIVERSARY celebrations.

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